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SUBJECT: INFORMATION MINISTER NOT WORRIED ABOUT SANCTIONS

Classified By: Ambassador Ronald K. McMullen for reason 1.4(d).

¶1. (C) Minister of Information Ali Abdu told Reuters he is unconcerned with sanctions, according to Jeremy Clarke (protect), Reuters' new Asmara correspondent. During Clarke's October 14 interview with the minister, Ali repeatedly denied allegations that Eritrea had any involvement in Somalia. During the interview, Ali directly dismissed sanctions, calling them "insignificant." The minister specifically told Clarke that even if sanctions were to pass, as currently envisioned they would have little or no impact on the country. Ali also became visibly frustrated that he had to repeat answers to questions that had already been asked, Clarke continued.

¶2. (C) Clarke has a scheduled interview with President Isaias Afwerki for Wednesday, October 21. Even though he suspects the president will simply brush aside the most hard-hitting questions, Clarke is collecting requests from diplomatic missions for topics they would like raised with the president.
McMULLEN